

**Southwest Resource Advisory Council
MEETING MINUTES
Friday, October 28, 2005
BLM Uncompahgre Field Office, 2505 S. Townsend Ave.
Montrose, Colorado**

ATTENDEES

Resource Advisory Council Members

John Field, Category 1	Drew MacLeod, Category 1
Anthony Gurzick, Category 3	Andrea Robinsong, Category 2
Howard Heath, Category 1	Alan Staehle, Category 3
Nik Kendziorski, Category 2;	Ellen Stein, Category 3
	Kathy Welt, Category 1

Not present: Don Bennett, Category 1; Mallory Dimmitt, Category 2; Andrew Gulliford, Category 2; Art Goodtimes, Category 2; and Ann McCoy Harold, Category 3

BLM Staff

Buddy Green		Mel Lloyd	
LouAnn Jacobson		Teresa Pfifer	
Dave Kauffman		Robin Sell	
Lynn Lewis			
Visitors	Representing	Town/City	
Rich Baca	Congressman John Salazar	Grand Junction	
Corrie Bonnar	Colorado Environmental Coalition (CEC)	Grand Junction	
Pete Kolbenschlag	CEC	Paonia	
Allan Belt	Montrose County Commissioner	Montrose	
Bob Heinrichs	Self	Olathe	
Peter Shelton	Uncompahgre Valley Assn.	Montrose	
Bill Patterson	Western Colorado Congress	Montrose	
Ken Lipton	Ridgeway-Ouray Community Council	Ridgway	
Bill Bottomly	Self	Montrose	

Opening Remarks/Designated Federal Officer and RAC Chair Time

Chair Kathy Welt called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. Today's attendance does not constitute a quorum.

Dave Kauffman is acting DFO today and reported that Uncompahgre Field Manager Barb Sharrow is doing well after surgery. Kauffman welcomed everyone and asked for a round table of introductions.

Field Managers Update

Gunnison Field Office: Buddy Green is acting for new Field Manager Kenny McDaniel. McDaniel, who recently received a forestry stewardship award from the Director, has a forestry

background and comes to Gunnison from the Washington office. The range program is currently working on 32 grazing permit renewals (33 allotments and 125,439 acres), as well as some land health assessments (LHA). There has been significant interest in the process from multiple organizations. Forest Guardians protested one small allotment. The decision was recently issued and there is a 30-day appeal period. The number of grazing permittees is down significantly to 79 with 34,000 animal unit months (AUM). The Environmental Assessment has been completed for the Hartman Rocks plan, but the plan is not yet signed. BLM is also updating the Recreation Plan for the Alpine Triangle. The Trout Creek land exchange proposal is in progress. BLM would exchange 555 acres for 640 acres in the Lake Fork Area. Access across the Slumgullion earth flow, an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, was denied, and that decision is being appealed. Contracts have been awarded for forestry treatment projects. The field office (FO) recently completed its fall cheatgrass treatment, working closely with the state's Division of Transportation and Division of Wildlife. DOW provided the herbicide through the Habitat Partnership Program. Over 350 miles of BLM roadways have been spot treated. The Gunnison sage grouse program is a major focus for staff.

Ellen Stein mentioned the Quivira Coalition out of New Mexico, an organization in which conservation and livestock organizations work well together.

Uncompahgre Field Office: Kauffman reported that work has focused the past few months on reorganizing the BLM Western Slope Center, and the FO absorbed many of its administrative employees. Several vacancies, including a biology supervisor, land law examiner and administrative officer, are also in the process of being filled. The FO had a successful year and accomplished several key on-the-ground projects. The new fiscal year brings new challenges with budgets likely declining for 2006. The FO is also working on grazing permit renewals and LHAs. BLM has launched an energy corridor Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which would result in pipeline corridor designations. This approved action would impact existing Resource Management Plans (RMP).

San Juan Public Lands Center: LouAnn Jacobson briefly explained priorities for the SJPLC in which planning and energy are two. The Northern San Juan Basin EIS is slated for completion in 2006. The joint Forest Service/BLM draft management plan should also come out in 2006. The Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (CANM) is working on its own RMP/EIS, and public scoping has been completed. After performance issues arose, a new contractor was brought onboard to finalize the process. A draft RMP should be out in summer 2006.

Centennial Celebration—American Antiquities Act: *Join the Adventure, Honor the Past, Shape the Future*

Jacobson announced that 2006 is the centennial anniversary of the American Antiquities Act. A year-long celebration of cultural and heritage events is planned, with volunteers and partnerships playing significant roles. Jacobson touched on what's needed to protect these resources, as well as the laws enacted to ensure their protection. More information can be found at www.blm.gov.

Land Acquisition Projects in Southwestern Colorado

Teresa Pfifer presented on the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1996 and the BACA Bill of 2000. The Fish and Wildlife Service, BLM, National Park Service, and U.S. Forest

Service (USFS) all received funding for LWCF projects. Funding awarded to BLM is historically less than what other agencies receive. Habitat, cultural and heritage resources benefit from funded projects, which must be located in specially designated areas within the National Landscape Conservation System. Partnerships with such organizations as The Nature Conservancy are critical to a project's success. Several FO priorities may be identified, but funding is likely for only a few statewide projects. Several projects throughout southwestern Colorado have been successfully completed in the past 10 years. Uncompahgre and Gunnison FOs, as well as the SJPLC, have all benefited from land acquisitions through the LWCF. All acquisition and land exchange projects are win-win in the end, but they can be complex and take a very long time to complete. Pfifer explained that land exchanges can be a great tool for BLM, but with other pressing priorities, land exchanges have not been used as frequently as in the past. \$5.4 million was appropriated in 2006 for BLM and five to six projects were chosen, which is a decrease.

Update on Gunnison Sage Grouse Policies/Strategies

Robin Sell gave an update on the BLM Gunnison Sage Grouse (GuSG) Management Plan. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Colorado Division of Wildlife have developed the Candidate Conservation Assurance Agreement (CCAA), which provides a number of assurances for private landowners that have this grouse species on their lands. The CCAA has been published in the Federal Register, and a final decision should be out soon. More than 90 landowners with 100,000 acres are interested in participating. An interagency steering committee, the Gunnison Basin Workgroup, helped develop the Rangewide Conservation Plan (RCP) and continues to meet, focusing on implementation of the plan. Gunnison County is hiring a sage grouse coordinator to facilitate the area's program. The county has established several goals in an effort to preclude the listing of the GuSG as an endangered specie. BLM has signed a memorandum of understanding with partners and issued an interim guidance policy. Leased parcels in GuSG habitat may be deferred at the discretion of BLM field managers. RCP strategies will be considered and incorporated into new leases. Onsite inspections ensure that stipulations are being adhered to on existing leased parcels. A contractor has been hired to assist with revisions to plan amendments statewide. This should take about a year and a half to complete. As BLM utilizes the NEPA process on a daily basis to evaluate and analyze impacts to public lands, guidelines protecting the GuSG are constantly being implemented.

BLM Lease Sale Notification Processes Update

Kauffman presented the BLM response to the Resource Advisory Council's six points discussed in the July meeting, which was drafted by the Colorado State Office. (see p.4 at http://www.blm.gov/rac/co/swrac/documents/swracmeeting_072205.pdf)

RAC feedback to responses:

1. The RAC was disappointed to hear that local FOs would be restricted in notifying the public if the entire Bureau wasn't following the same procedure. BLM needs to incorporate new notification procedures into the Energy Act pilot project. Sending the lease packet to counties or using public service announcements was also suggested. The BLM should provide better customer service to private land owners, just as they are to industry. Better customer service is needed during the protest period as well. The RAC was interested in knowing which counties have the advanced IT infrastructure capable of providing lease parcel information.

2. The time limit of 45 days is an issue, and this was not addressed in the response.
3. The RAC felt the expense of \$20,000 wasn't credible when a public notice can cost as little as \$25.
4. After a split-estate parcel is leased, the lessor or BLM should be required to notify the land owner in writing within 10 days.
5. Owner involvement at the Application for Permit to Drill (APD) level is too late. The owner needs to be informed prior to any leasing activity.
6. The response and point made is clear. Timing for owner notification is the major issue.

Andrea Robinsong suggested listening to public comment and then drafting an additional request to BLM. However, no vote can be taken without a quorum.

Public Comment Period

Peter Shelton is a surface owner of a split-estate parcel. The August lease sale was protested, and he would like to know about the status of the protests involved as he has heard nothing from BLM. BLM's Lynn Lewis said that a decision by the BLM State Office would hopefully be out within a few months.

Ken Lipton submitted the above-mentioned protest on behalf of several land owners. He did not receive acknowledgement from BLM of having received the protest. The BLM response to the RAC's six points is bureaucratic, and BLM needs to understand that leasing split-estate parcels is a life-altering event for those land owners involved. Leased parcels are making BLM millions of dollars, and for them to claim that they don't have the resources to notify private land owners, is ludicrous. The people are BLM's customers. Another issue is land use; the Ouray county planning and zoning staff are writing new policies addressing drilling activity. Protecting the health, welfare and safety of citizens is important. Lipton asked the RAC to consider this when advising BLM.

Pete Kolbensschlag spoke about the proposed Bull Mountain pipeline that would cross portions of Garfield, Mesa, Delta and Gunnison counties. New gas development will spread if that proposal is approved, impacting the environment and quality of life. NEPA notification requires that adjacent land owners be notified and similarly, landowners and adjacent owners should be notified of lease sales. He urged the RAC to exert their authority in advising BLM to work with state authorities to define gray areas of the law. Alan Staehle responded that the state has empowered local governments to regulate land use.

Allan Belt commented that each county is looking at the lease sale notification process in a totally different way. Commissioners are still seeking to find some thread of continuity. The same public seems to be participating in each oil and gas forum being held. Others need to be encouraged to attend.

Bill Bottomly submitted comments in writing pertaining to the current transportation mapping exercise being conducted by the city and county of Montrose. These comments will be distributed by mail to RAC members.

Miscellaneous

A portion of funds generated by the lease sale needs to come back to local FOs to use in addressing notification needs. The RAC would like input from the public on issues and concerns important to them, and is considering forming a working group to address customer service issues surrounding the lease sale notification.

Welt, Stein and Art Goodtimes will work together to finalize the letters discussed at the July meeting.

Next Year's Meetings

At least five meetings will be held during 2006, with each occurring on the third Friday of the meeting month. BLM will choose various locations around the SW RAC jurisdiction. The SW RAC would like to invite the Northwest RAC to the January meeting to discuss the lease sale notification process. Members are asked to reserve November 17 for a meeting if the RAC feels it necessary.

2006 meetings

January 20 (NW RAC invited)

March 17

May 19

July 21

September 15

Topics for January meeting:

Gold Book presentation

BLM lease sale and protest notification processes

Closing Comments

The meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.